

May 2015 extended essay reports

Geography EE

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-7	8-15	16-22	23-28	29-36

The range and suitability of the work submitted

As in previous sessions, weaker essays tended to adopt a descriptive approach or did not incorporate spatial elements. A number of essays were no more than topic literature reviews that did not allow for data analysis or manipulation and where graphics were simply copied and pasted without alteration from secondary sources. Some essays continue to be thinly disguised fieldwork reports more suited to IB Internal Assessment work and are therefore not suited to the requirements of an extended essay as they often present results only and do not involve the development of an argument. Some essays were rather formulaic in that all the essays from a centre adopted exactly the same statistical methods of analysis for different topics, indicating that the candidates had not been encouraged to use their personal initiative or imagination. Some centres had similar research questions for several candidates but with different study areas, thus limiting candidate initiative in choice of research question.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

Unsuitable research questions are non-spatial, too broad in scope or engender a descriptive approach. If hypotheses are used, they should cover the entirety of the research question, leaving no gaps in the analysis. Attempts to evaluate the future success (or failure) of projects proved problematic, since they were unable to provide solid evidence for any evaluations made. The best questions investigated spatial variations within a small, often local, area.

Criterion B: introduction

Introductions were generally good. The stronger ones made explicit references to geographical theory. Problems arose where candidates did not develop a thorough academic context related to the research question. Often, the significance or worthiness of the investigation was not clearly established with many simply indicating that the topic was of interest

Criterion C: investigation

Most showed evidence of planning, however, problems often arose with a lack of quality or quantity of data when using surveys with too few respondents to draw valid conclusions. Some referred to “random samples”, without providing any evidence as to what made them “random” as opposed to merely opportunistic.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Most demonstrated good understanding of the topic. Weaknesses occurred in relating results to geographic theory and in explaining anomalies using reasons other than poor methods of data collection.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Most presented ideas logically. Descriptive essays scored badly. The best essays developed a balanced argument that often led to the formulation of unanswered questions, suggestions for further investigation or revised hypotheses.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Weaker essays used no appropriate analytical skills. Marks for this criterion were hampered by a reluctance to show the findings on maps - an ideal starting point for spatial analysis and discussion of any patterns identified. Some candidates used correlation techniques without testing the significance of the results, referring to “weak correlations” without statistical justification.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

Most communicated clearly using appropriate terms, however, candidates should avoid terms such as “natural disaster” which is, for good reason, excluded from the syllabus. Some still use MEDC/LEDC, which is out-dated terminology. Candidates need to differentiate between “sustainability” and “environmental sustainability”, and “development” and “economic development”.

Criterion H: conclusion

Some did not state the research question in the conclusion or included new material more appropriate to the discussion section of the essay. Pleasingly, an increasing number critically examined the reliability of their data and methodology in formulating valid conclusions.

Criterion I: formal presentation

Formal presentation was satisfactory or better in most cases. Most illustrations are now attributed to original sources. Most essays included the necessary formal elements though a number wrongly placed the abstract after, instead of before the contents page. Candidates should not quote ultra-long “google.com” search URLs but should state the URL of the page used on its original site. The quality of graphics remains a concern. Unaltered web-based

images are rarely suitable unless of high quality. Candidates should consider redrawing diagrams to highlight important aspects that best suit their purpose.

Criterion J: abstract

Many candidates fail to achieve full marks for this section. The research question should be stated as written on the title page and introduction. Scope should mention the study area, data collection, the types of information gathered and how it was used. The findings should be stated very clearly. The abstract should not be a summary of the essay structure

Criterion K: holistic judgement

The high scoring essays showed independence of thought and employed innovative investigative methodology. Essays that adopted a descriptive or formulaic approach negating personal initiative scored less well.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

- Show candidates exemplar extended essays (found on the OCC)
 - Make sure the candidate focuses on a single, clearly worded and tightly focused research question
 - Make sure the research topic fits the requirements of the subject criteria
 - Make sure that the emphasis is on spatial analysis (explanations of patterns, distributions, locations)
 - Ensure that the research question encourages analysis and argument and allows for the application of statistical or spatial analytical techniques
 - Encourage the use of maps as an analytical tool
 - Make candidates aware that Google is only a search engine and not a source in itself
- Ensure that the abstract clearly states the required elements and is correctly placed